



STATE EDUCATE 2024

THE CHILDREN STUDY GUIDE

State Theatre Company South Australia presents

THE CHILDREN

By Lucy Kirkwood

SYNOPSIS

DUNSTAN PLAYHOUSE: 2 FEB — 17 FEB 2024

SCHOOL PERFORMANCES: 8 FEB

RUNNING TIME

Approximately 110 minutes

Ages 16 +, year 11 and 12

Contains adult themes, mild coarse language, mild sexual referenes and the use of herbal cigarettes

Please see the 'What to Expect' notes for more detail on content.

The Children is set in 'a small cottage on the east coast', where Hazel and Robin, two retired nuclear scientists in their mid-sixties, are living. A recent disaster at the local power station where they used to work has devastated the area and they live under the threat of radiation pollution. Electricity and water are rationed and they keep a Geiger counter to check for signs of radiation. However, Hazel is determined to preserve some semblance of normality and live the healthiest life she possibly can. So, Robin now farms, while Hazel practises yoga and devours salad. But when Rose, a former colleague whom they haven't seen for 38 years, suddenly turns up, she disrupts their precariously ordered existence. Rose is determined that they must fix the problems they have caused for the next generation, even if it means certain death. Exploring issues of accountability, guilt, and morality, Lucy Kirkwood's three-hander presents a very real, post-nuclear world.

The Children has one location, three characters, and plays out in real time over the 90-minute duration of the play. It was a theatrical impulse born of a political one, the desire to slow people's thinking down, bring them into real reckoning with the true implications of their decisions. "That's what drama is," says Kirkwood, "looking at human beings under pressure trying to do things that they find difficult."

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CREATIVE TEAM & CAST



Playwright

Lucy Kirkwood



Director

Corey McMahon



Set/Costume Designer

Victoria Lamb



Lighting Designer

Nic Mollison



Composer

Belinda Gehlert



Sound Designer

Andrew Howard



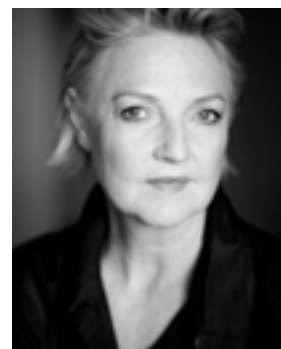
Performer

Tina Bursill



Performer

Terence Crawford



Performer

Genevieve Mooy



Stage Manager

Bridget Samuel



Assistant Stage Manager

Ashlee Scott



THE CHILDREN CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM: KRISTY REBBECK

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT THE CHILDREN LUCY KIRKWOOD

Lucy Kirkwood is an acclaimed British playwright and screenwriter. In 2009, Lucy's play *It felt empty when the heart went at first but it is alright now* was produced by Clean Break Theatre Co. at the Arcola Theatre. The play was nominated for an Evening Standard Award for Best Newcomer and made Lucy joint winner of the John Whiting Award 2010. *NSFW* premiered at the Royal Court Theatre, starring Janie Dee and Julian Barrett, in 2012.

Chimerica, premiered at the Almeida Theatre in 2013 and subsequently transferred to the West End, earning the Best New Play at the 2014 Olivier and Evening Standard Awards, as well as the Critics Circle Award and the Susan Smith Blackburn Award. Recent work includes *Mosquitoes*, presented by special arrangement with Manhattan Theatre Club, which opened at the National Theatre in summer 2017, and *The Children*, which premiered at the Royal Court, London, in 2016, and opened on Broadway in December.



INTERVIEW WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT LUCY KIRKWOOD

Where did the first seed for *The Children* come from?

I had been trying to find a form for a long time to write about climate change in a way that was emotionally rather than intellectually driven. What is important and theatrical to me is not the facts of climate change – we all know the facts now, and most of the average theatre audience will believe in them too. What is interesting is this: if we know the facts, why are we failing so catastrophically to change our behaviours? I wanted to write something that didn't harangue or nag an audience, but was generous, honest and unsentimental about how difficult it will be to make the changes that we need to, about how overwhelming that might feel – an awakening perhaps, but a terrifying one. The idea you can do nothing because the disaster is already too large is an infantilising one (one of the many reasons for the title), and the play is about three people growing up into active agents. And of course the way in which they do that was very much inspired by what happened at Fukushima. When I heard about the heroism of the retired work-force returning to the plant to help with the clean up, lots of different and long gestating ideas started to finally come together for me.

The *Children's* plot gradually unfurls, bit by bit and some have described the play as a slow burn. Did you approach the telling and crafting of *The Children* in a particular way? For example, was your writing process different for *The Children* than for some of your other plays?

It's the first play I've written that is sort of Aristotelian, that means in a sense unity of time and place. A lot of my other work has a lot of time frames in them and [take place] in certain different locations. The characters [in *The Children*] travel a long way in about an hour and fifty minutes and so it was very important to me...I wanted them to do that realistically and at the speed that a human body moves, I suppose. They all decide to make some very momentous decisions in the course of the play. But it's very important that you're accurate and precise and that you take the time to watch people make those decisions, and I think look at the things they're wrestling with. That's what drama is...looking at human beings under pressure trying to do things that they find difficult. I'm a massive admirer of Kenneth Lonergan; he's one of my favorite writers. His work is so much about people traveling a short distance with enormous effort. I think that's what we're watching on stage in *The Children* as well.

these questions were taken from an interview with Lucy Kirkwood published in Stage Buddy.

You can also find interviews with Lucy Kirkwood on YouTube. This helps us understand Lucy's thoughts behind the play.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-is0cHFQJIA>

Script Excerpt

Rose: So the house is okay?

Hazel: No the house is a wreck..

HAZEL gathers the salad leaves into a colander and washes them in bottled water.

We were lucky. When the wave came, the house was flooded but not destroyed. The fields and the garden were destroyed but the house was just stinking and full of silt it was cosmetic you know but I can't describe to you the stench. I waded through it up the stairs, the carpet squelching and something else, something dreadful, a smell a feeling a hopelessness. Like the infinite sadness. And I couldn't cope with thinking: how are we going to clear it up? and I cried, Rose, I just sank down at the bottom of the stairs where the pencil lines mark the children's heights and I / was just

Rose: Your poor thing.

Hazel: crying thank you because the mess the mess was just overwhelming

ROSE takes the salad from her and shakes it dry.

Hazel: It was overwhelming Rose.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE FROM COREY MCMAHON

"I understand now, that for the world to not, you know, completely fall apart, that we can't have everything we want just because we want it".

For a director, reading plays is part of your stock and trade. Over time, you learn to spot the plays that - while they might be well written - are missing that crucial something that elevates them to a truly great play. And then you have the plays that, within a few pages, you know are something special. Lucy Kirkwood's *The Children* is one such play. I knew I was reading something extraordinary. In fact, as soon as I finished my first read of it, I immediately returned to the start and read it all over again! Kirkwood has written a complex, funny, moving, intelligent and provocative play, populated by three ordinary people faced with making an extraordinary decision.

The play opens in a slightly ramshackle cottage, on the East coast of England. This seemingly innocuous, domestic setting, belies the true nature of the story we are about to witness. Husband and wife, Robin and Hazel are retired nuclear physicists who worked at the local nuclear power plant for almost 40 years. They have made 'home' in the cottage, following a devastating nuclear accident at the plant, triggered by a freak earthquake. The resulting tsunami flooded the local area (including Robin and Hazel's home), overwhelming the plant and the systems in place that regulate the temperature inside the reactor.

In the face of such a disaster, Robin and Hazel adapt their lives to the world that emerges in the wake of the accident. Hazel does yoga and keeps fit and active. Robin visits their farm to feed the cows and makes homemade wine.

It's all seeming to work for them, until one night they are visited by a former colleague, Rose, who has come on a mission. Secrets that have remained buried for 38 years are unearthed, as Rose's return acts as the catalyst for Robin and Hazel to confront the consequences of decisions they made in relation to the plant several decades ago.

You'll note I am giving very little away here! To say anymore would be to undermine the power of the play and the profound questions it poses.

On the surface *The Children* appears to be a play about life in the shadow of a nuclear accident. It is that and so much more. *The Children* is about our instinct as a species to replicate ourselves, continuing to populate a planet with finite resources. It's play that explores the tension between wanting more and settling with what we have. It is also a play that asks a difficult but necessary question: Who should take responsibility for decisions taken in the past that have had a profound impact on our lives in the present?

The play is a theatrical tour de force for our amazing cast, led by Tina Bursill and supported by Genevieve Mooy and Terence Crawford. It has been a privilege to work with them, learn from them and see them tackle Lucy Kirkwood's big little play head on. We have been blessed with an extraordinary creative team, production designer Victoria Lamb, lighting designer Nic Mollison and composer Belinda Gehlert. Their work in creating the world our characters inhabit has been inspiring. And finally, a big shout out to our stage management team, who are the backbone of this production. We couldn't have done it without you!

We hope you enjoy *The Children*.



COREY MCMAHON AND BRIDGET SAMUEL PHOTO THOMAS MCCAMMON

AN INTERVIEW WITH COREY MCMAHON

Corey McMahon was interviewed during Week 2 of rehearsal

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqKg-Ojk7jM>

Questions asked included the following.

What was your initial reaction on reading the play?

How do you manage to highlight the macro/bigger issues that the play is about through the micro/domestic setting of the three characters in this small cottage? Why do you think Lucy has pared her play back given the scale of the subject matter?

What do you see as the themes of the play?

What kind of people are the three characters?

What is the significance of creating the right set for this play?

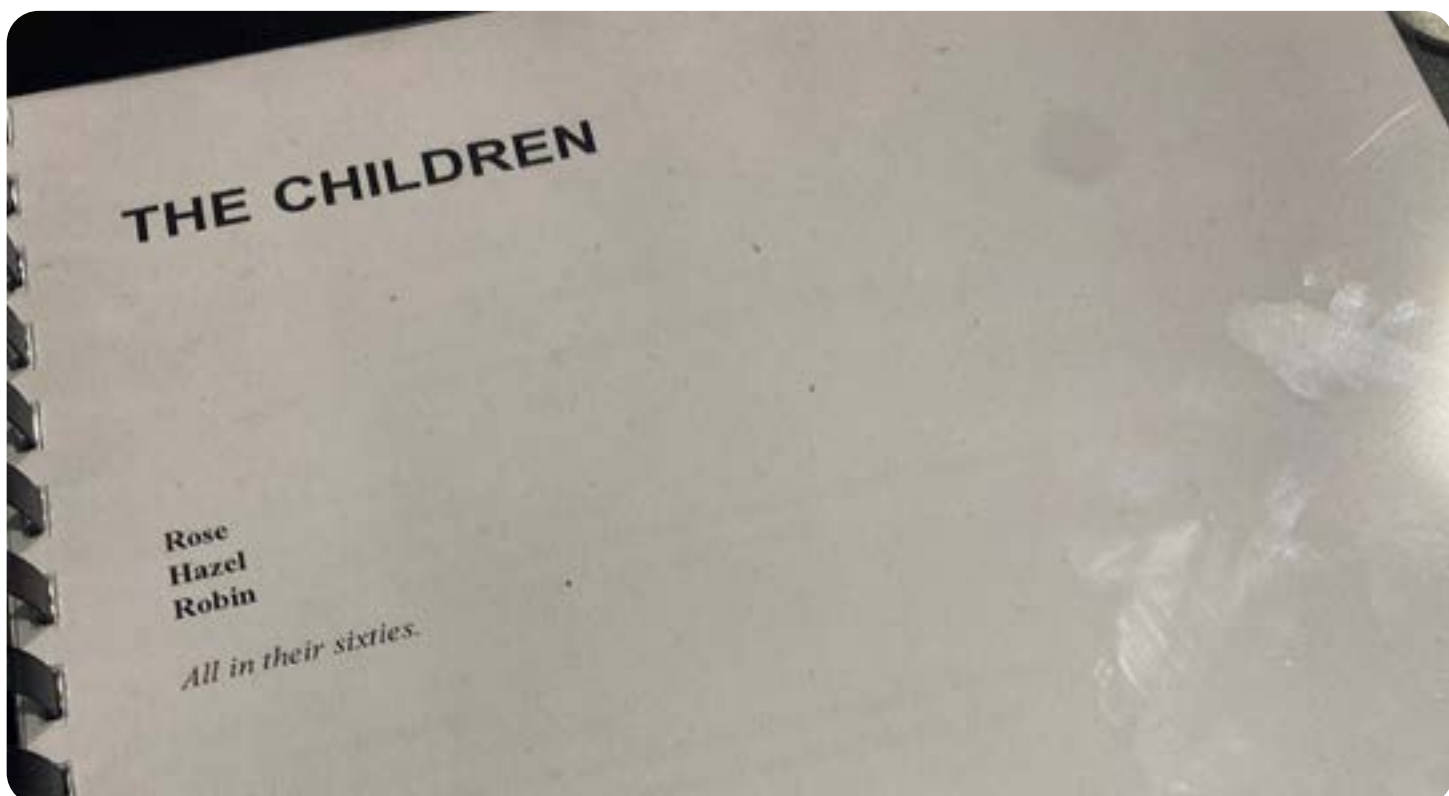
Given that Lucy has spoken about Fukushima, and the cottage is set on the coast - what do you think the significance, if any, of the ocean is?

DRAMATIC NOTES

Lucy Kirkwood has crafted a play driven by its characters and narrative. The constriction of the external world upon a singular interior space, the kitchen within a small coastal cottage precariously perched on a cliff, creates a palpable sense of claustrophobia and confinement. This theme extends to the limitations imposed within the house, where a geiger counter gauges the safety of the outside environment, electricity is variable and toileting is restricted by the macerator's capacity.

These macro/micro observations seamlessly apply to the characters themselves. Kirkwood introduces the conflict between desires and actual needs through a romantic triangle. Initially rooted in seemingly trivial small talk, the love triangle gains depth as the play progresses, delving into profound ethical and life-altering issues. Discussions about ethics, choices, and the boundaries of self-interest emerge as provocations rather than judgments.

The central challenge faced by the characters revolves around agency, as hinted at in the play's title. Despite the absence of physically present children, the title may allude to Hazel and Robin's two daughters and two sons, or symbolize the broader idea of the upcoming generation inheriting a tainted legacy from their parents. The play evokes a sense of childhood disempowerment—questioning “what can we do?”—reflecting a lack of agency in shaping the future. It unfolds as a collective dialogue among the cast, grappling with the question of impactful actions that could make a difference. The title itself underscores the enormity of the issue, almost rendering it infantilizing in its scale.





REHEARSAL ROOM : PHOTO THOMAS MCCAMMON

What next?

Our “What next?” sections include questions and activities based on previous pages. These can be used for individual reflection or as class exercises.

Lucy Kirkwood has spoken about her desire to write about climate change, trying to find a way through which to talk about it.

She uses the real life experience of the horrendous explosion at Fukushima as her inspiration, drawing on the example of nuclear scientists returning to help clear it up.

Spend some time researching the Fukushima disaster and what is happening at the site now (you will find a link to an article at the end of this guide).

Think of the many examples of climate change happening here in Australia that you could draw on and create a synopsis for a play.



TINA BURSILL, GENEVIEVE MOOY AND TERENCE CRAWFORD : PHOTO MATT BYRNE

THE CAST Q&A

These responses have been taken from video interviews with the cast of The Children, Tina Bursill, Terence Crawford and Genevieve Mooy.

Tina Bursill

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTmVK1AdYYs>

Terry Crawford

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQePPJCBD3g>

Genevieve Mooy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kXytAJlp3g>

The cast

<https://statetheatrecompany.com.au/news/meet-the-cast-interview-with-tina-bursill-genevieve-mooy-and-terence-crawford/>



TINA BURSILL AND GENEVIEVE MOOY IN REHEARSAL: THOMAS MCCAMMON

Script Excerpt,

ROBIN takes out a small Geiger counter and runs it over the trike. It clicks very slowly.

Tell you what girls, you nearly lost me tonight.

HAZEL tuts. ROBIN examines the reading.

Nearly had to scrape me off the shingle.

Hazel: Robin don't.

Robin: Twenty five.

ROBIN gives HAZEL a thumbs up, puts down the Geiger counter. He gets on the trike and, knees by his chin, rides it round the table.

Robin: It's a little game I play, Rose. The top field runs right along the cliff and every year, I drive the tractor a little closer to the edge and every year the edge comes a little closer to the tractor.

Hazel: The coast is just crumbling away around here. Has been for centuries.

Robin: I tell you, it's a thrill.

Hazel: It's reckless is what it is.

Robin: Our age, you have to show no fear to Death, it's like bulls, you can't run away or they'll charge. You've got to keep grabbing him by the lapels, poking him in the eye and saying: not yet mate.

I've got your number, boyo. Keep him in line. Else he'll steal up behind you while you're trying to get the lid off your Bingo pen and have you away.

ROBIN leaps off the trike.

HAZEL makes a 'there you go' gesture to ROSE.

Hazel: If you're not going to grow, don't live.

Rose: Still. I really don't think you should do that Robin.

Hazel: I've told him, he's mad, it's Russian roulette.

Robin: Only when I take a bottle of vodka along.

HAZEL stares at him.

Robin: Skol!



TERENCE CRAWFORD, TINA BURSILL AND GENEVIEVE MOOY IN REHEARSAL: THOMAS MCCAMMON



THE CAST, GENEVIEVE MOOY, TINA BURSILL AND TERENCE CRAWFORD : PHOTO JESS ZENG

CHARACTERS/ROLES

There are three characters in Lucy Kirkwood's play *The Children*.

Hazel, played by Genevieve Mooy.

Hazel is a retired nuclear scientist in her 60's, living in a remote cottage off the British coast, with her husband. She is organised, likes structure and purpose to her life. She is about routine and the ritual of daily life, she is a determined and practical woman, maintaining her health, through diet and yoga. Control of the body helps control of the mind, despite the exclusion zone that they live in, and the air quality and the restrictions which are outside of Hazel's control. If she has control of this she can somehow control and manage the threat of death, the threat of disease, of the ever threatening cancer. She portrays a strong and confident exterior however we can sense her fragile interior, it is as if she is always just waiting, expecting it to fall apart.

She is married to Robin and has four children. The eldest of which is Lauren. It is revealed that her pregnancy with Lauren appeared to be a 'mistake', a notable exception for Hazel who carefully plans and arranges her life.

Script Excerpt

Robin:: Have we got any steak?

Hazel : You know we haven't.

Robin: I feel like a steak. I feel like tearing something's flesh with my teeth

Hazel: There's salad or crackers.

Robin: Salad or crackers! You mean I have choices! A la carte! did you hear that Rose, the decadence coming from my wife's mouth, it's like the last days of Weimar Berlin in here tonight!

Hazel: Not or, I didn't mean or, you can have both

Robin: Both? Both! Have you taken leave of your senses woman! Hazel You're showing off, he's showing / off, Rose.

ROBIN opens a box of crackers, eats two or three in one go.

Robin: Can't wait until this is over I cannot actually wait to roast a chicken without feeling like the antichrist. How much longer do you think the power shortage will last Rose?

Rose: Why should I know?

Robin: You're still in touch with the world. I imagine you as someone who reads a newspaper. Watches TV. Tweets, do you tweet Rose?

Rose: I do not tweet.

Robin: No, we're not tweeters either, are we dear, we've barely mastered the microwave.

He picks cracker from his teeth. Offstage, a phone rings.

ROBIN and HAZEL look at one another.

Robin: We're just simple retired nuclear engineers slash farmers who have no idea when the powers that be will resume normal service, get that will you Haze?

HAZEL goes.

ROBIN picks cracker from his teeth.

I've got a dry mouth now

ROSE fetches ROBIN a glass of water. The phone stops ringing.

Rose: I don't expect it'll be much longer. A month maybe.

Robin: A month! Thank you.

Rose: It's a good thing though, isn't it?

Downing the water.

Robin: What?

Rose: Well. Learning to live with less. ROBIN picks up ROSE's hand and kisses it.

Robin: But I don't want to live with less. It's hell.

Rose: Well you might have to.

ROBIN moves behind her.

Robin: Well then I shall shoot myself with a bolt gun.

He kisses her neck.

Rose: The resources are finite.

Robin: Well maybe people should be taught to use less of them then.

Rose, played by Tina Bursill

Rose is also a retired nuclear scientist in her 60's who worked with Hazel and Robin. However she is almost the opposite to Hazel, embracing the chaos and unpredictability of life. She is single, and has no children, although we understand she has had relationships and has deliberately made the choice to not have children. She has been living abroad, and has a relaxed and carefree approach to life and relationships. She is at ease with her age, her health and her sexuality. She understands that death is unavoidable, and that the deal has been made in terms of health. And we can't negotiate out of it.

Robin, played by Terence Crawford

Robin plays the third of the retired nuclear scientists that worked at the nuclear plant before the explosion. He is married to Hazel and has four children, two daughters and two sons, but we come to discover that he also has had a previous relationship with Rose.

He is portrayed as thoughtful and intelligent, caring and accommodating. It is when Rose appears that we begin to see that all is not as it appears with Robin. He has been hiding things, and not fully honest with Hazel. We can feel him take a turn toward redeeming the choices they made when they were younger. He adopts a more rebellious yet responsible attitude, seemingly disregarding how Hazel feels. He is more fatalistic in terms of the future ahead of them.

What next?

The characters have known each other a long time, do you think their relationship would change if they had not?

The character of Lauren is an offstage character - how might you incorporate her into the conversation? What might she add to the big question that Rose poses?

Pick one of the characters and underline their objectives, conflicts and journey throughout the play.

What would you do in these characters shoes? Consider words like responsibility, life experience, survival, guilt.



SET DESIGN - PHOTO: RACHEL BELL

DESIGN ELEMENTS

AN INTERVIEW WITH VICTORIA LAMB SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

The set design is a naturalistic design, yet we see areas of breakdown, fractured and incomplete - drawing parallels to the themes of the play. Whilst the set and the action of the play are within the realms of our current world, there are heightened circumstances. Moments where we can absolutely believe this is now but with a greater risk.

The interview can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPmrhF033-g>

Questions we asked Victoria:

What, if any, were the design challenges that you immediately noticed when reading the script? If so how do you work around them?

What is the significance of creating the right set for this play? Given that Lucy has spoken about Fukushima, and the cottage is set on the coast – what do you think the significance, if any, of the ocean is?

How do you ensure that the actors remain safe when working on the raked stage?

HAZEL

Senevive Mooy

- TASTEFUL, EXPENSIVE COUNTRY CASUAL
- SPORT TOP WITH COLLAR
- QUILTED VEST
- YOGA FRIENDLY 3/4 PANT
- SKETCHERS' CANVAS SLIPONS.



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ROBIN

Terence Crawford

- FARM WORK CLOTHES
- CLOTH CAP
- FLANNEL SHIRT
- FADED OILSKIN VEST
- OLD JEANS
- WORK BOOTS
- DIRTY BOOTS AND JEANS



The Children'
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COSTUMES DESIGN BY VICTORIA LAMB



VICTORIA LAMB, SANDRA ANDERSON AND MIA RESCHKE

SCENIC ART

AN INTERVIEW WITH SANDRA ANDERSON

This interview can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f28MiC4O5oM&t=2s>

We asked Sandra about the scenic art process and the technical challenges she faced in the play.

LIGHTING DESIGN

AN INTERVIEW WITH NIC MOLLISON

This interview can be viewed here:

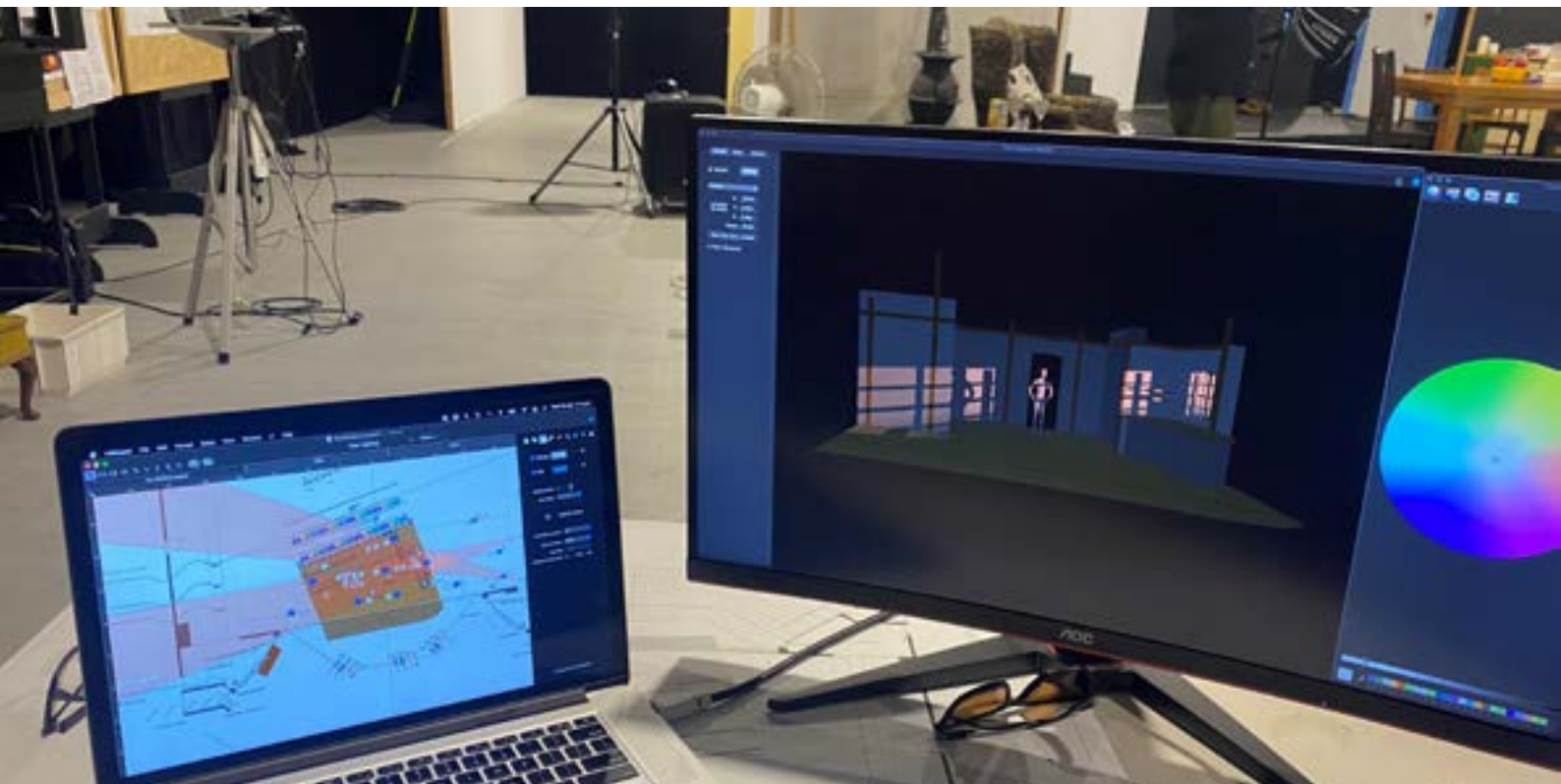
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dCTnaShWuQ>

Questions we asked Nic:

What, if any, were the design challenges that you immediately noticed when reading the script? If so how do you work around them?

What is the significance of creating the right lighting for this play?

The play is set with a restriction on the use of electricity – how do you reflect this in your lighting design?





SCENIC ART WITH VICTORIA LAMB, SANDRA ANDERSONA AND MIA RESCHKE - PHOTO: FIONA LUKACL

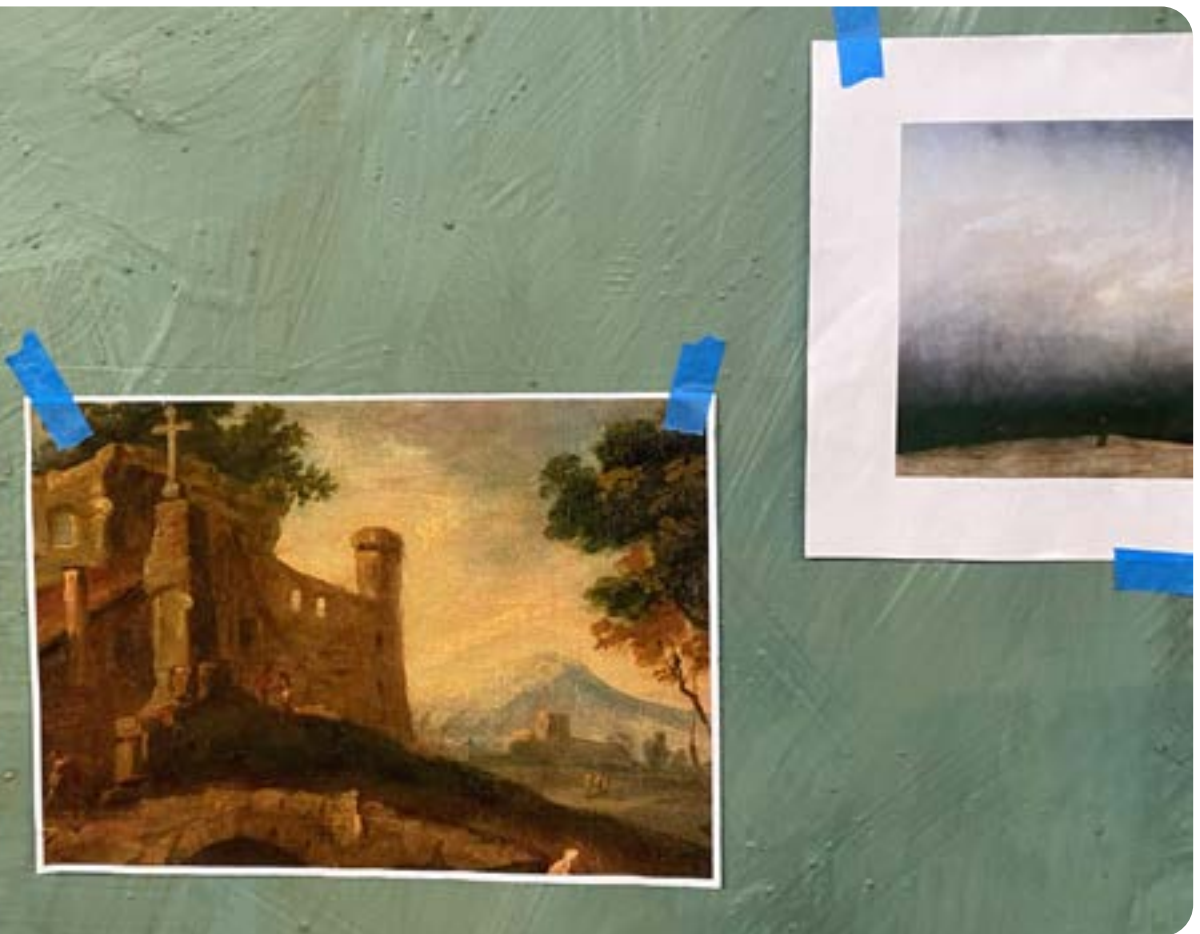
What next?

Think of the design process and the set, costume and lighting for this play. Taking into consideration the information above, create a palette for your own design.

The set is focussed on the interior of the cottage, how might you create the exterior of the set? List the functional considerations for the plumbing effects? How does the set designer work with the production team to ensure this operates every night without risk to the cast?

Could you add or subtract pieces of the set and still tell the story? What pieces do you believe are essential to the play?

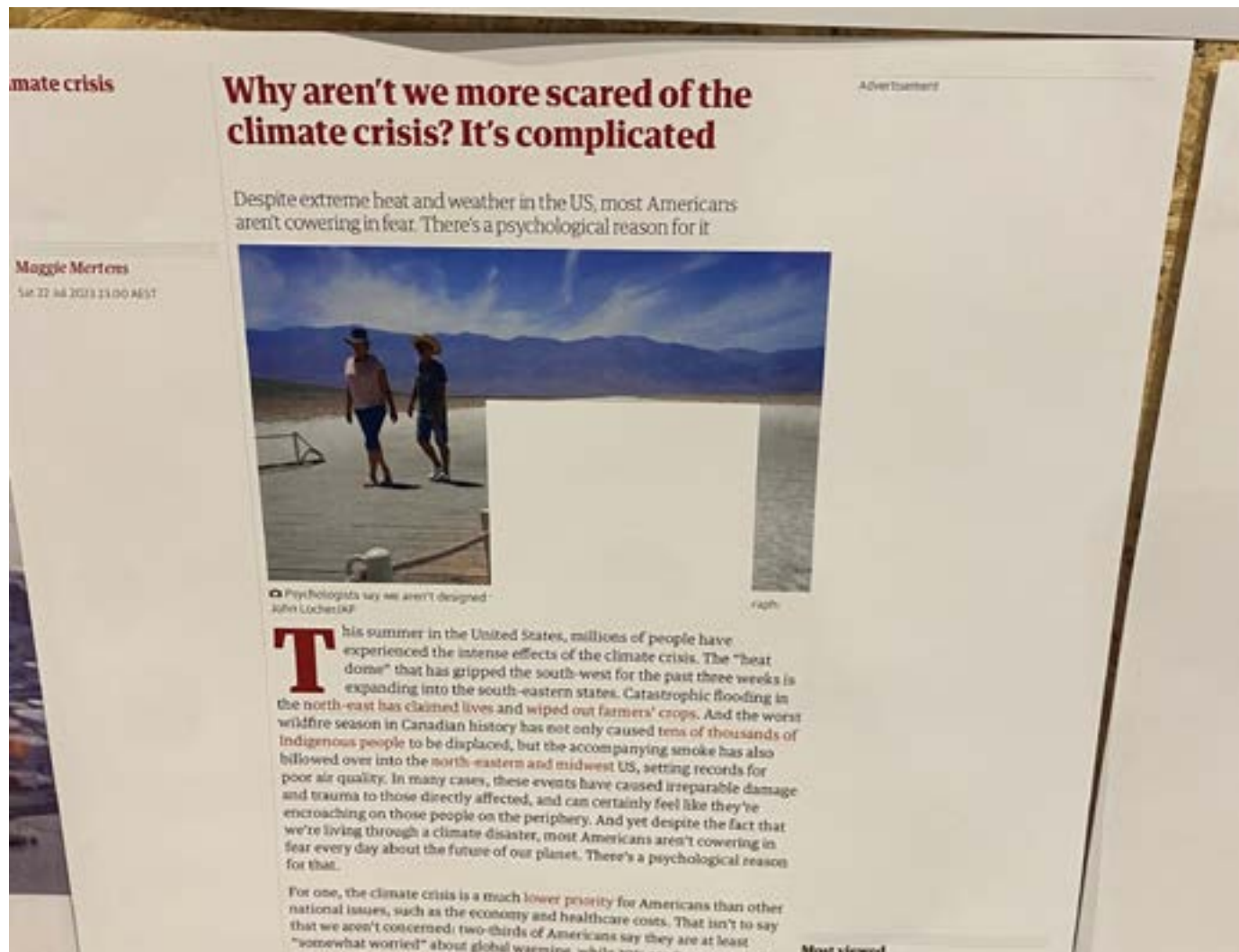
The play is set in a world with limited electricity - how does this impact the lighting choices of the lighting designer?



INSPIRATION FROM VICTORIA LAMB DESIGN PROCESS - PHOTO: FIONA LUKACL

THEMES & CONCEPTS

IN *THE CHILDREN* BY LUCY KIRKWOOD



THEME BOARD REHEARSAL ROOM

Lucy Kirkwood has written a play that is on the surface a character study, delving into the lives of three retired nuclear scientists now living different lives but with the background of choices they made years ago surrounding them.

She has entwined the human stories within the environmental questions that the play poses on a higher level. Rather than point the finger at individuals and assign blame she has chosen to provide an example of the complexity of the conversation. What does it look like in reality to begin to change our behaviours and take responsibility?

Intergenerational responsibility

Who is responsible for the actions of both current and past generations concerning the future? Among the profound question posed by Kirkwood is the challenge of "how to desire less." Hazel, Rose, and Robin dedicated their years as physicists to the nuclear factory, aiming to forge a better future for humanity and the planet. However, the aftermath of the accident has left them with

scant resources, the threat of ill health and prompts a reevaluation of their past decisions and life choices.

Over successive generations, we have constructed a society fueled by consumer-driven demands, particularly on a material level. Our consumption of energy, often without consideration for the future and its implications for our descendants, has led to the depletion of resources and the exploitation of the Earth for immediate gratification. Kirkwood prompts us to reflect on how we reconcile our past excesses with the essentials we can reasonably live without. She urges us to ponder our moral obligation to those inheriting the planet.

The title, “The Children,” directs attention to the subsequent generations and underscores the significance of our decisions and actions in shaping the legacy we leave for them.

Self Sacrifice

When contemplating the role that various generations play in ensuring the well-being of our planet, it is imperative to reflect on our individual responsibilities. “The Children” prompts us to examine our own lives and the decisions we make with an eye toward the future. Capitalism has ingrained in us a set of aspirations, fostering desires for a future adorned with all its associated luxuries. The central question revolves around distinguishing between what we want and what we genuinely need. Our existence within an economic system often revolves around creating desires rather than satisfying them. How can we break free from this programming, learn to desire less, and willingly relinquish the expectations ingrained in us? Can we initiate change by embracing the small adjustments needed?

The play delves into the exploration of a life stripped of endless wants. It vividly portrays the experience of living without, though not necessarily by choice. The characters find themselves on the brink of questioning their past actions and contemplating the possibilities that lie ahead. The narrative prompts an examination of each character’s conscience, directing them to make choices that define their paths in this shifting landscape.

The Environment

The play does not present us with an apocalyptic world, or a world where we see a barren and devastated environment, but rather shows us a world not dissimilar to the one we are in today. Where we are aware of the pressures on the environment and that our actions have an impact but it sits outside of our capabilities to enact significant and real change.

In fact, the environment we are presented with in Lucy Kirkwood’s play is entirely inside the walls of the cottage. We have reference to the impact the disaster has had through the mention of the exclusion zones, the electricity restrictions, the geiger counter, the devastation and death of livestock, reduction in food sources and the fact that simple bodily functions such as toileting require additional consideration. The health implications of the environmental disaster are present within two of the three cast.

Our environment needs care and attention for us all to prosper. When we ignore the planet for our own needs we face an inevitable situation as depicted in the entirely realistic situation of the cast in *The Children*.

Script Excerpt:

Robin: But it's not safe, in fact it's very unsafe, they're not stupid Rose.

Rose: Yes but

Hazel: Yes but what?

Rose: You have the power to...you have a power. You have power, and you've both already had long and full lives.

Hazel: Long? Long, I'm sixty seven that's / not long

Rose: The people working there now are in their twenties and thirties, they have young families, /it's not

Hazel: Look it's, what you don't – is I come from a line of very long living women. My granny was a hundred and three when she died peacefully in her sleep, not bleeding from her gums not hair falling out nausea bloody vomit diarrhea not leukaemia, / body riddled with

Rose: The effects of the radiation could take twenty years to affect us by which time we'll be

Hazel: By which time we'll be dead anyway?

Rose: Probably, yes. Or dying.

Hazel: I AM NOT OLD.

Robin: You must have known, what you're saying, what you're / asking

Hazel: She is saying you are past your sell by date, you are dispensable, shrivelled up cannon fodder, this bloody COUNTRY. I should've lived in the Mediterranean! I could have sat under an olive grove until I was a hundred and twenty like a pickled walnut, I would've been respected, they would have called me Gerondissa, my age would have been a badge a badge of honour, / not

Rose: I think there is honour in this. I think this is very / honourable

Hazel: How dare you come here. Show up unannounced and bring, bringing this / poison into our

Rose: I did send an email.

Hazel: What good is that when we aren't using the computer?

Robin: No, we're not using the computer Rose, it eats up the power.

Hazel: And anyway what a thing to write in an email 'dear robin and hazel how are you I am well would you like to come and get cancer with me?'What font / did you use?

Robin: Hazel, please.

Hazel: Did you put a little smiley face at the end? A row of kisses? LOL RSVP?

Rose: It was more. General.

HAZEL starts to serve the salad.

Hazel: And what I resent most is is is is is your tone your expectation that we will feel guilty. What am I supposed to feel guilty about? I've done my bit. I I I I I I / I

Robin: You helped them remove the topsoil from the playground didn't you?

Hazel: I did, I helped them do that.

Robin: And we barely use any power.

Rose: Yes but / that's not

Hazel: It has compromised us. All of this, we have been compromised

Rose: You don't have a right to electricity

Hazel: What a thing to say.

What next?

What other themes do you believe the play addresses?

Prepare a table and list the themes addressed, and where you encounter these issues in your daily life.

Choose two areas and prepare a short scene with characters to highlight conflict and resolution.



SCRIPT EXCERPT

Hazel : Oh, by the way. A man came today. Young. Clicky pen. He said they're talking about putting those things those windmills on the heath and did I want to sign a letter of support.

ROBIN tops up their wine glasses.

Robin: Well, wind. It's a start.

Hazel : It's an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Robin: Only when you're there my love.

Hazel : Creep.

Robin: When Hazel walks across the heath, the crickets all go cheep cheep cheep

Hazel: Crickets don't cheep.

Robin: What do they do then?

Hazel : They rub their hind legs together.

Robin: Perverts.

Rose: Personally I think fusion is still our best hope.

Robin: Not after this.

Rose: No, well. If no-one loses their / heads

Robin: It's a terrible thing. A terrible dreadful thing, we can't just plough on as if nothing's, can we, no, we need more wine.



INTERESTING INFORMATION

CLIMATE CHANGE

There is a widespread consensus acknowledging the escalating temperatures, leading to significant changes in our climate. Observable consequences include hotter summers, widespread bushfires, catastrophic flooding, intense storm events, the diminishing of ice caps, and the rising of sea levels and temperatures. Islands are sinking, and coastlines are gradually vanishing. The terms “climate change,” “global warming,” and the current “global climate crisis” all underscore the undeniable reality of the world rapidly heating.

Climate, specifically, refers to the average weather conditions over time rather than isolated weather events. It involves the documentation of long-term alterations in climate spanning decades or more. Scientists concur that human activities are the primary cause of this warming trend. The accelerated use of fossil fuels and deforestation has led to a swift surge in greenhouse gases, contributing to global warming.

The predominant contributor to global warming is the release of carbon dioxide into the environment during activities such as powering homes, driving cars, agricultural practices for food resources, and industrial operations.

However, there are available options to actively participate in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, mitigating climate change, and preserving our planet.

OFF GRID OPTIONS

The issue of responsibility toward future generations and the planet extends beyond those who will directly confront the consequences. Where does the responsibility lie? Is it with the present scientists, policymakers, or investors? As a society, have we sufficiently directed research, financial resources, and investments to the right areas? The transition towards sustainability requires time, and during this period, do we possess the capability to adopt an “off-grid” lifestyle?

Living off the grid entails relinquishing dependence on everyday utilities such as electricity, gas, sewerage, and water—resources we often take for granted. Recognizing the finite nature of these resources, the decision to live off-grid is a commitment to self-sufficiency, relying solely on what one can personally provide. Embracing sustainability involves making choices based on genuine needs rather than mere desires.

<https://au.renogy.com/blog/offgrid-living-australia-7-things-you-can-follow-c2ff2f/>

<https://theconversation.com/from-laggard-to-leader-why-australia-must-phase-out-fossil-fuel-exports-starting-now-219912>

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The play unfolds in the aftermath of an explosion, a time when resources have been compromised, and the impacts imposed on the characters. At a pivotal moment, Rose declares, “electricity isn’t a right.” In our current world, marked

by high expectations and driven by consumerism and capitalism, the prospect of wanting less poses a formidable challenge.

While individual actions may seem insufficient to address climate change on a grand scale, the collective impact of examining our behaviours and consumption patterns holds potential for change. The prevailing economic models of consumerism and capitalism in Western society foster a relentless pursuit of more. Therefore, the idea of wanting less and making do with less becomes a complex and challenging concept, one that Lucy Kirkwood asks us to examine.

As individuals, the power to effect change lies in our daily choices. Although we may not individually alter the course of climate change, collectively, our decisions can contribute to substantial transformation. Taking steps such as becoming informed, evaluating choices in transportation, considering dietary habits and sources, and ensuring recyclable waste options for purchases are all constructive ways to initiate positive change and reduce our environmental footprint.

<https://www.wwf.org.uk/thingsyoucando>

<https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/christmas-waste-2023/>.

FUKUSHIMA DAIICHI NUCLEAR DISASTER

<https://www.sustainabletheatre.org/narrative/children>

Reviews of the Sydney Theatre Company production

<https://www.artshub.com.au/news/reviews/review-the-children-at-sydney-theatre-company-255482-2359111/>

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/theatre/the-children-review-tide-turns-and-turns-in-this-seaside-drama-20180404-h0yaor.html>



Script Excerpt:

Hazel : I'm sorry, I hope you don't mind me asking / but

Robin: Hazel.

Hazel: No, I should have said before but well did you do a number one or a number two?

Only the macerator on the downstairs toilet is very unreliable and if you did – if you did do a number two then it will cause it to overflow which is, it's a very messy / business so

Rose: It was a number one.

Hazel : so we only use downstairs for number ones, if you did want a number two I'd ask you to go upstairs.

Rose: It was a number one.

Hazel : Oh good! I'm sorry. I should have said before.

Rose: It's fine.

HAZEL smiles.

ROSE glances towards the door.

HAZEL watches her. She almost says something. Doesn't.

ROBIN shakes his head at HAZEL, warning.
HAZEL looks at ROSE.

Hazel : I'm so sorry, I hate to / press the

Robin: Haze, drop it.

Hazel : no but you're certain aren't you? Only I know it's embarrassing but it's better just to say now / otherwise

Rose: I'm certain.

Hazel : You did a number one?

Rose: Yes.

Hazel : Not a number two?

Rose: No.

Hazel : You know what I mean when I say number one and / number

Rose: Yes.

Hazel: Yes. No, good. Good! Sorry. That's wonderful.

Robin: Jesus.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

WRITTEN RESPONSE

Think about the situation of climate change in Australia at the moment. What steps do you see the government taking to help protect future generations from the impact of climate change on the planet?

Prepare a written review of the production, noting the writing, directing and elements. What do you think the audience took away from the performance?

For guidelines on how to write a review, see our review writing resource linked in the dropdown menu for *The Children* at

<https://statetheatrecompany.com.au/state-educate-resources/>

DISCUSSION & WRITTEN ACTIVITY

Analyze the interaction between Rose and Hazel at the beginning of the play, and where Hazel finds herself by the end. What has happened to shift Hazel? Does the fact that she is not terminally ill affect her position? What other options could she have? Write an epilogue for the play, contrasting between two different characters, perhaps even utilising Robin and Hazel's unseen 'children'.

Create a list of all actions you could take to reduce your impact on the planet. What are some of the easily identifiable capitalistic choices we make in life?

ACTIVITY

Think about the final scene. How could you rewrite this scene with a different outcome? Once the scene has been written then stage it using some of the design choices you have considered earlier.



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